

HANDBOOK FOR
STUDENT TEMPORARY
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
(STEP)
EMPLOYEES



July 1999

FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

Welcome to Edwards Air Force Base!

Your success as a student at Edwards Air Force Base (EAFB) depends largely on your own efforts. It is important for you to begin employment with an attitude of cooperation and a commitment to learn as much as possible while performing our duties to the best of your ability. Motivation, interest and a positive attitude on your part during the first few days will be good indicators of your probable performance in the periods of work to follow.

This handbook was prepared specifically to help you, the student, benefit from the STEP. Use this handbook to your advantage. We recommend that you read it thoroughly, then review it periodically during your program enrollment. The handbook covers most situations that you are likely to encounter; however, if you have a question about something we may have overlooked, remember to call this to the attention of the Civilian Personnel Flight. Don't assume you know the answer! Remember that you have many people you can call on in case there is a problem, either at work or at school. Don't be afraid of "bothering" them with questions; they can't help unless you ask.



INTRODUCTION

The STEP offers you practical work experience, an opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge about the Air Force as an employer, and the chance to meet and work with employees who have varied backgrounds and career experiences. In addition, your employment will provide income needed to help meet school expenses.

From the standpoint of EAFB management and staff, the program offers an opportunity to observe and evaluate your academic and work performance over an extended period. An added benefit is the opportunity to establish and improve existing relationships with local high schools and colleges in the surrounding communities.



ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Citizenship. The STEP is open to non U.S. citizens provided they are lawfully admitted to the U.S. for permanent residence.

Age. Students must be at least 16 years of age at time of appointment.

School Affiliation. All students in the STEP must be continuing students enrolled, or accepted for enrollment, for substantially half-time attendance throughout the semester or quarter in an accredited school, and must be working toward a high school diploma, certificate, GED, associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree. Once the requirements for a master's degree have been completed, individuals are no longer eligible to participate in this program and must be separated.

For this purpose, substantially half-time means:

a. High School: Minimum number of courses or hours required to obtain a diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) as certified by the school. High school students must be successfully progressing toward their diploma and meeting their targeted graduation date.

b. College: 6 semester units or 10 quarter units. If the college's definition of half-time status is different than indicated, a statement from the school must be obtained. Enrollment for on-line courses will be allowed. However, no more than one on-line course per term will be credited toward the required 6 units of study. Correspondence courses are not allowed.

An accredited school means: A public or private secondary school, or institution of higher learning, which is accredited by a local board of education, or technical or professional association, or any other recognized accredited body.

A continuing student is defined as: One who is continuing immediately from high school to college, from one college to another, or who has just recently entered college and has completed a minimum of one school term.

Grade Point Average: While employed, students must be in good academic standing at all times. Applicants must have a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 in order to be referred for the program. They must maintain a minimum of 2.00 **each** school term for continued employment.

If the GPA falls below 2.00 at the end of the school term, the student will not be allowed to continue employment. If a student maintains a GPA of 2.00 or above, but receives a “D”, they will be placed on probation for one school term. If a student receives an “F”, they will be removed from the program. The grades of “D” and “F” will not be tolerated.



INITIAL SELECTION AND RETENTION

Students will apply for the STEP by completing the Job Kit and forwarding it to the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph AFB, TX. A copy of the Job Kit, along with proof of program eligibility, should also be forwarded to the program coordinator. Proof of program eligibility may include transcripts, report cards, or a signed statement from a school official stating the units enrolled in and current GPA.

Students who meet all requirements are referred to the selecting official.

Students are hired on temporary appointments not to exceed one year. The temporary appointments may be extended each year if the student continues to meet eligibility requirements. To continue in the program, you must:

- a. maintain substantially half-time academic status
- b. attain a 2.00 GPA or above each academic grading period, and
- c. accomplish satisfactory work.

Twice a year – once in the spring and once in the fall – a letter will be sent to each student and supervisor requesting the previous semester's grades and upcoming semester's registration. **Failure to provide the requested documents by the suspense date will result in termination from the program.**

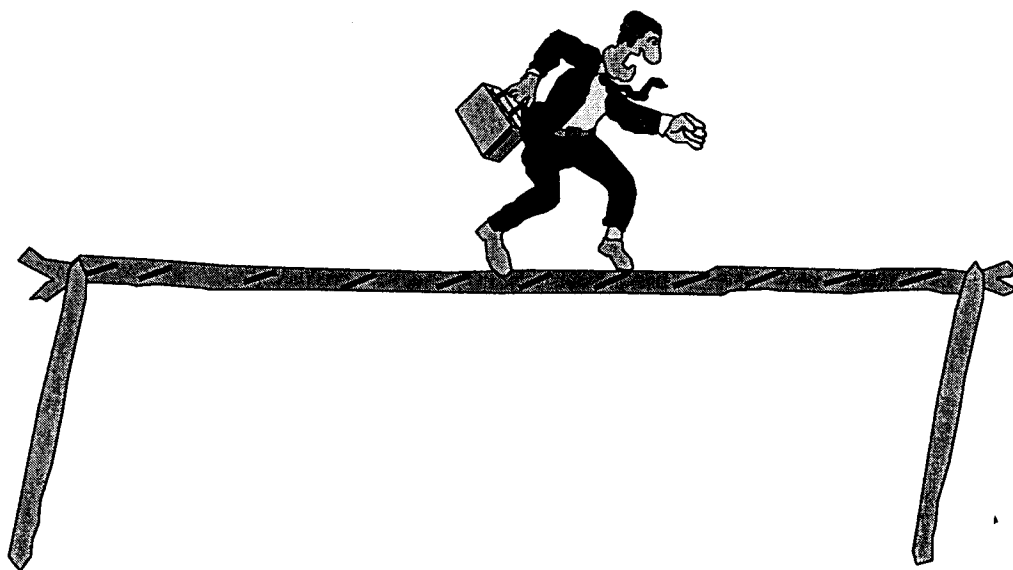


CONDUCT

It is important that you deal with coworkers, supervisors, and other EAFB associates in a professional manner. This means that you must be polite, provide information when requested, and ask questions when you are unsure of how to proceed. When dealing with the public, you must remember that you are a representative of EAFB.

Occasionally, you may see a permanent employee doing something that you have been cautioned against. That does not mean you can or should follow suit. In fact, if you do, you may be separated from federal employment. If you are confused about what is acceptable conduct, request clarification from your supervisor.

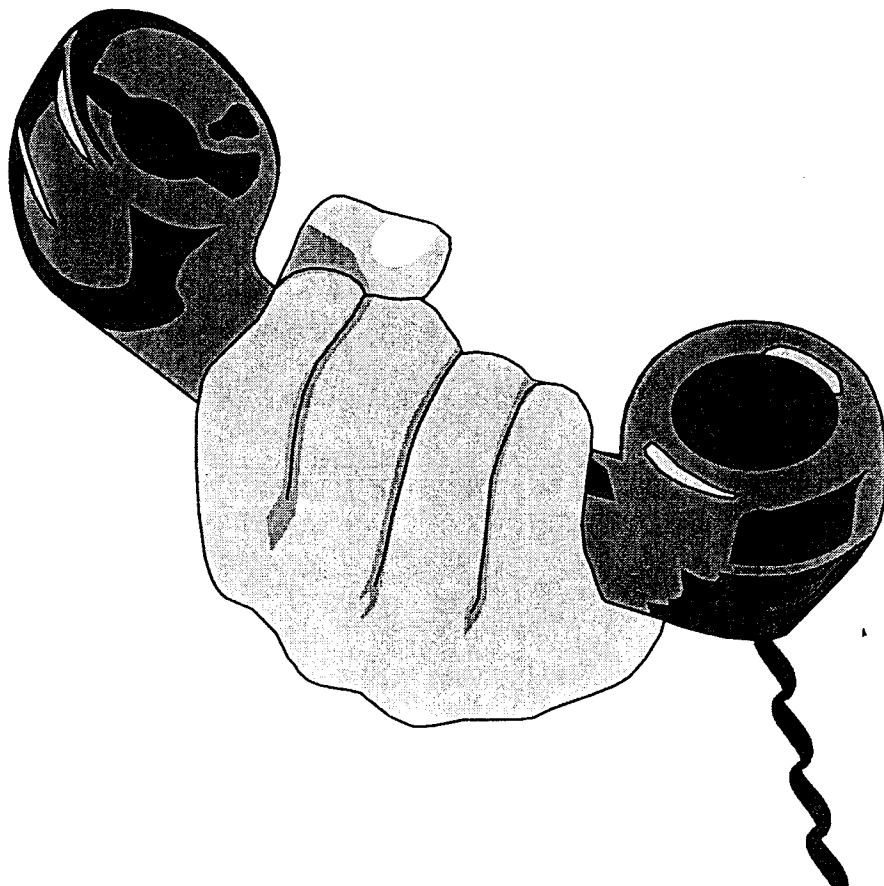
Briefly stated, a student has no special privileges. You will be working alongside other employees. No privileges or allowances beyond those outlined to you by your employer are either expressed or implied by your status as a student. You will share many of the privileges allowed a regular employee, and your responsibilities and what will be expected of you will be very similar to other EAFB employees.



GOOD COMMUNICATION

Students are expected to do their best at whatever task is assigned to them, no matter how routine. Doing such tasks will convey to the supervisor that you can handle more varied or difficult work. When you have questions or instructions are not clear, ask your supervisor. Don't be afraid that by asking you will appear to lack knowledge; the opposite is true. Your supervisor will be impressed that you are trying to do a good job. This is your opportunity to gain insight into how the government operates, the types of positions held by civil service employees, and the requirements (education and/or experience) for these positions. Make the most of this opportunity. You are the key to whether it will be a positive or negative experience.

Keep abreast of what is going on throughout your work experience. It is very important to maintain good communication with supervisors, coworkers, faculty advisors, and the program coordinator. Read EAFB instructions and other notices carefully, and ask questions if you don't understand what they mean or how they apply to you.



ALPHABET SOUP

As a student, you may hear an “alphabet soup” of words that you may not understand. These words and many abbreviations used so often in the government can be very confusing. The use of acronyms (examples include EEO, FPM, and CPF) may overwhelm you at first. The government has an abundance of these and many are peculiar to one specific department or job field.

You may want to start your own acronym notebook. When you hear a term that is unfamiliar to you, ask a coworker to explain it, then jot it down for future reference. When you hear something you don’t understand, ask for an explanation. Long time EAFB employees sometimes forget that an abbreviation or acronym may not be meaningful to a new employee. Remember to ask.



YOUR JOB ASSIGNMENT

As a new employee who may be unfamiliar with EAFB procedures, you will not be expected to immediately begin performing technical duties. Expect rather routine assignments. Keep in mind that you must demonstrate your readiness for each increase in responsibility. As you become more familiar with the responsibilities and duties in your work section, you may be progressively assigned more complex work tasks, depending on your grade level. Remember that you were hired to do a job for EAFB as well as learn from us.

If you wish to change from one STEP position to another, you must submit your resume (using the Job Kit) to the Air Force Personnel Center, as originally done when applying for the program. Your resume is kept on file for six months and you will be considered for any position that you are qualified for during that time period.



PERSONNEL PRACTICES

This is a very important section of this handbook. The Civilian Personnel Flight staff will brief you on regulations and procedures when you first report for duty. Your supervisor will counsel you about specific procedures and practices at your job location. The following guidelines are general, and they apply to all students. Specific personnel related questions should be directed to the Civilian Personnel Flight or your supervisor.

Dress and Appearance. You are expected to dress appropriately. Appropriate dress is the general guideline and does not include "short" shorts, halters, T-shirts, or other items of casual apparel which are, for several good reasons, inappropriate in the place of business. In some cases security, safety and health requirements will imply certain restrictions; for example, ear protection may be required in some areas. Your supervisor will tell you if and when these restrictions apply to you. You should make every effort to get along and fit in with your coworkers, so make your overall appearance consistent with your job. This will help you gain the respect and acceptance of fellow workers, your supervisor, and non government employees with whom you come in contact.

Employee Interaction. You will interact with many people as a student. Therefore, you will want to gain the acceptance of coworkers, other students, teachers and professors, supervisors, and others. Attempt to assist coworkers when called upon remembering that you represent yourself, a profession, and your school or university. It helps you, the STEP, and future students when you are a good will ambassador.

Leave, Holidays, and Work Hours. As a student, you will begin earning annual leave, sick leave, and holiday pay. High school students may work part-time up to 20 hours per week while school is in session, and may work full-time during any vacation period or whenever the school is officially closed. If you wish to work full-time during vacations, you must notify your supervisor. College students may work part-time up to 32 hours per week while school is in session, and may work full-time during any vacation period or whenever the school is officially closed. Schedules will be determined by the student and the supervisor. It will be necessary for

every student to coordinate his or her schedule with the program coordinator. STEP employees work year round.

Do not leave work early without permission. If you should need to leave early or come in late, discuss the situation with your supervisor. Such permission should be requested only on rare occasions. Do not feel that because another worker leaves early it is okay for you to do the same. Special changes in arrival, departure and lunch times are worked out between a supervisor and his or her employees. Talk with your supervisor rather than taking anything at face value.

Attendance. A good attendance record is crucial. You and the people you work with are all members of a working team. The work of the group suffers when any member is absent. You are expected to arrive at work on time and only be absent when you have been excused by your supervisor. If you know you will need to be absent for any reason, obtain permission from your supervisor in advance. If you are going to be late (because you have a flat tire, for example), call your supervisor. If you become ill and cannot report to work, you must call your supervisor as early in the day as possible to let him or her know, but no later than two hours after you are scheduled to start work. Call your supervisor yourself rather than asking a friend or coworker to deliver the message.

Pay and Advancement. The grade level of a position depends on the responsibilities that position entails. Grade levels range from GS-1 through GS-4, and WG-1 through WG-2. You may be eligible for promotion when you reach a certain academic level or your position's responsibilities increase. Promotions are not automatic. The supervisor must submit a personnel action to promote their STEP employee.

GS employees are not entitled to within-grade increases. WG employees will receive within-grade increases with the same waiting periods as permanent WG employees.

Concerns and Problems. If you become confused about any aspect of the program, or if you do not understand what is expected of you, ask for help. Do not ignore the problem while it gets worse! Discuss the situation with your supervisor, the program coordinator, and your school advisor. Many

times, problems may be resolved through your immediate supervisor. For that reason, you are encouraged to talk to him or her first.

Release and Resignation. Your enrollment in this program continues through your entire education enrollment period, provided you meet the program requirements. **You will be released from the program if:**

- a. You drop out of school (you must be enrolled as a half-time student as defined by your school)
- b. You fail to attain a 2.00 GPA or better in academic courses each semester or quarter.
- c. Your work performance, even after counseling, remains unsatisfactory.
- d. You fail to produce required transcripts or other program related paperwork in a timely manner as required by the program coordinator.
- e. Your services are not longer needed, or funding is no longer available.

Your enrollment is a commitment, not a contract. For this reason, you also have the option of resigning from the program. Student may feel the need to resign for several reasons; for example, you may decide to attend school out of the local commuting area. Resignation is a personal decision which should be discussed with your supervisor and the program coordinator. If you decide to resign, you need to document your resignation on a Personnel Action Request (PAR), indicating your reason. It is a good business practice to give two weeks notice of your intent to resign.

CONCLUSION

This handbook provides general information and guidance in a variety of areas, rules, regulations, and policies which are subject to change. For further information refer to 5 CFR Parts 213 and 338, and the Civilian Personnel Flight Operating Instruction. Whenever you have specific questions that require accurate, up-to-date answers, you should talk to your supervisor, the Civilian Personnel Office or the STEP Coordinator. You have been provided an opportunity to begin a meaningful journey. Your success will depend on your efforts. You have our support. We hope that your employment here at Edwards Air Force Base will be a rewarding experience, both personally and professionally.

